BISHOP CHARLES BENNISON AT THE FEDERAL BUILDING ON FEBRUARY 11, 1998

There is no question that Saddam Hussein is a tyrant who has been ruthless in his willingness to torture and kill his opponents and their children. There is also no question that he is extremely shrewd in dealing with those in the international community who seek to control or oppose him.

The proposed U.S.-British 4-5 day air war against Iraq is purportedly aimed at forcing compliance with UN demands for free and full inspection of Saddam's weapons' sites. If such a response were appropriate for Saddam's refusal to comply with UN requirements, why does it not have the support of the Security Council? Or President Yeltsin of Russia? Or President Prodi of Italy? Or the leaders of Jordan and Saudi Arabia? Or even the real support of Kuwait, liberated by the U.S. in the 1991 Gulf War? Why has UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan cautioned against it? Iraq's leaders, he said on the BBC yesterday, have "painted themselves into a corner and we need to work with them to get them to back down, but, I think we should not insist on humiliating them."

Our Administration in Washington demonstrated at Waco and Ruby Ridge that it sometimes lacks the necessary patience and tolerance for ambivalence to resolve such crises successfully when our opponents are "painted into a corner."The Oklahoma City bombing was the result. If we think that after the Gulf War seven years ago Saddam could not or would not retaliate in such a way we are being very naive.

If we bomb Baghdad, ours will not be technologically sterile warfare. We do not know where Saddam's biological weapons are stored. There will be civilian deaths. There will be POW's taken. There will be massive destruction of the Iraqi infrastructure, further devastating and robbing life from an already economically impoverished, politically disempowered, and psychologically demoralized people. We will get to see it all on TV -- 25 TV networks, including our main US ones, are already in Baghdad. The rest of the world will see it, too -- and it will hold our country, you and me, not Saddam, responsible.

Will the weapons be completely gone? No. Will the inspectors be allowed in? Even if they are, will it really solve the problem? They were allowed in for seven years, and the weapons still exist. Will Saddam be eliminated? It is highly unlikely. The last war only weakened his people, leaving him and his Republican Guard relatively stronger.

In last Monday's *Philadelphia Inquirer* Mark Sacharoff suggested that a far more productive course out of the present impasse is to negotiate with Saddam -- his oil for our willingness to help reconstruct his war-damaged nation. We did it with Germany. We did it with Japan. In Iraq's case, the dictator is still in power. But that dictator is not without either self-interest or national pride. If we are now going to gamble on making war in response to Saddam, the offer of such negotiations is a far better gamble than risking allied or Iraqi lives.

Finally, I wonder if the President's compulsion to bring order quickly "over there" is not psychologically or politically compensatory to his inability to bring order "right here" at home. And I wonder if it is because we no longer have in the Soviet Union an "Evil Empire" over against which we can come together that we have turned Iraq into an "Evil Empire" we can oppose. Thank you.